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Including the 'Invisible Middle' of Decoloniality

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Including the 'invisible middle' of decoloniality

By Su-ming Khoo[1] and Anique Vered[2]

Abstract

This article traces a conversation around how to theorise and approach the inclusion of experiences, concepts and bodies situated in the 'invisible middle' of decoloniality. If coloniality is an immense, lengthy process resulting in colonial/modern structures (Mignolo 2007) comprising the 'colonial present' (Gregory 2004), 'decoloniality' requires surfacing, baring and bringing to bear the invisibilities and erasures of bodies that exist and resist with, through and in spite of colonial extraction and appropriation.

We explore and connect different ideas of 'being in the middle' of decoloniality, paying particular attention to the notion of 'the invisible middle' in embodied practices of solidarity (Vered and Mason 2015, Moten and Harney 2013, Simpson 2013), and noting the similarities with the 'included middle' in transdisciplinary thought and practice (Khoo et al 2019; Nicolescu 2010; Gibbons and Nowotny 2001). The 'invisible middle' emerges in hidden-in-plain-sight, politically engaged affective orientations (Gregg and Seigworth 2010), while the 'included middle' is an axiomatic concept in transdisciplinary, transformative praxis. We discuss embodied and creative practices of art and 'dance politics' as jumping-off points for further thinking-with decolonial haunting. In particular, we think with feminist lenses like Ettinger's 'matrixial borderspace' (2006), Barad's 'intra-actions' (2007) and Rivera Cusicanqui's motley *'ch'ixi'* (2012), to surface affective entanglements and co-emergences of meaning that return to what really *matters*, moving beyond accounting-for-difference and towards accountability. In tracing our exchange, we respond to the call to orient thinking towards transformation, and for decoloniality to be 'an engagement with difference that makes a difference to what was originally thought' (Bhambra 2007, 880).

Keywords: decoloniality, invisible middle, solidarity, transdisciplinary, transformative praxis, dance politics, accountability, difference

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Introduction: surfacing, baring and bringing to bear

~ There is a learning the world.
An un/doing all the mattering,
a making sense to co-exist with the possibility of other possibilities. ~

It is somehow assumed that we 'know' what we are talking about when we speak of decoloniality. But decoloniality is not the same as 'post-colonialism' or decolonisation after the establishment of the postcolonial state and formal handover of power by colonial authorities. 'Coloniality' cannot be made to go away *just like that* because it is a vast historical, material and cultural legacy that remains, haunting the 'colonial present' (Gregory 2004). The moment of decolonisation does not tell us what to do with our colonial history, or how to make a future different from the colonial past.

This is a conversation that opens in the middle of a complex and ambiguous situation, as we try to trace the decolonising figure's entanglements with the colonial ground. We are in the middle of things, unsure about taking any of the 'sides' that are there to be taken. It seems that we have to deal with traumas that are not our own, but that cannot and should not be disowned, either. We want to be accountable, or at least to move towards accountability. But we also see that the positions and identities that we have learned may be too tight and restricting and might be broken or challenged by the possibility and necessity of unlearning. We are worried that these identities do not account for a great deal of matter, for what really matters, for our entanglement with other beings and other things - the materiality of the world. If we could make sense of this messy middle, we might be able to re-introduce ourselves to what matters, in ways that allow coexistence, and conviviality, in a decolonial frame. A living-together in ways that do not cancel out differences but engage with difference in a way that makes a difference to what was originally thought, in a way that brings to bear possibilities for solidarity and moving together differently.

To be haunted can mean being tied to the historical and social effects of the past (Gordon 2008). We are 'haunted' in the sense that we are invisibly entangled with existing structures of being, knowing, thinking and acting. We cannot help being deeply structured by colonial histories and associated oppressions, yet we hope that there is at least a chance to make different mistakes; by being aware and not completely falling back into the reasoning, boundaries and lines of identification that keep people boxed-in and too tightly-bounded, preventing them from seeking other ways of being bound-together. In this article, we explore a conceptual and ethical working-through of this problem, using ideas emerging from artistic practices, which we treat as embodied and aesthetical workings-through. Instead of a straightforward antagonism against a dominant modern-colonial political economy, we use the idea of the included and invisible middle to consider the entanglements explored in contexts of contemporary art practice, psychoanalysis, women's studies and cultural theory.

Within the global system of racial capitalism and oppression, the logic of exploitation-for-accumulation is a perfectly rational and indeed functional logic. Discrimination, by cheapening the lives, work and knowledges of the majority, acts as a surplus-creation machine. This structure haunts us and requires baring, so that the extent of bearing – the costs, the labour, the psychic injury of misrecognition is not invisibilised, but made visible and intelligible and is accounted-for.

In asking how we might move from the 'postcolonial' to the decolonial, the sociologist Ramòn Grosfoguel says adopting a racial/ethnic subaltern positioning 'has much to contribute'.

However, he admits that this epistemic stance leaves large dilemmas unresolved. It remains unclear whether it is even possible to imagine worlds of radical politics and global solidarity - beyond capitalism, beyond identity politics, beyond nationalism and colonialism? He remains uncertain whether a critical cosmopolitanism is possible and if it can offer an alternative to fundamentalisms, of both the Eurocentric and the Global South kinds. He is unsure whether we can think about political economy and culture at the same time, whether we can think past the respective reductionisms of economism and culturalism. It is a big question whether we can overcome Eurocentric modernity, without 'falling back into fundamentalism' (2006; 167).

Asserting that knowledges are always situated, Grosfuguel opts for a decolonial strategy that takes an alternative epistemological standpoint to challenge the 'point zero' perspective of the Eurocentric colonial-modern, via a 'body-politics of knowledge' and demand for 'epistemic freedom' (Grosfuguel 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). We, on the other hand, are concerned with relational being and thinking-with beyond subject positioning. We wish to consider the beings and relations that are caught in the middle and made invisible by their positioning in-between poles of subject identity.

While he claims to draw upon Anzaldúa's (US-Third World feminism) in order to synthesise it with other counter-hegemonic approaches, Grosfuguel misses the central point of her border thinking. His avowal of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo 2002) is rooted in the intellectual history of Latin American liberation philosophy, a heterogeneous body of thought rejecting economic, cultural, and political dependency and searching for autochthonous intellectual resources (Mendieta 2016). Anzaldúa is concerned with experiences that emerge beyond the limits of either (North American or Mexican) culture. Her queer reading of Chicana writings sees them as cultural texts that give voice to borderlands. She chooses to dwell in the messy middle of them instead of approaching the border from the Other side. We feel that this is thinking with, rather than past the dilemmas experienced within the borderlands, a thinking-with that leads us to reach for Bracha Ettinger's concept of 'matrixial borderspace' (2006) as space to be inhabited, instead of the 'colonial power matrix' as an entire matrix to be rejected (Grosfuguel 2006, 169).

Therefore, in the midst of feminist borderlands and matrixial borderspaces, we think with *decolonial interventions* to attend to the inclusion of experiences, concepts and bodies situated in the 'invisible middle' of decoloniality. If coloniality is this immense, lengthy process resulting in structures comprising the 'colonial present' (Gregory 2004) of the colonial-modern, capitalist system (Mignolo 2007), 'decolonial interventions' point towards a surfacing, baring and bringing to bear modes of being and politics that are less visible, invisible or seemingly unintelligible. This includes the works, acts and bodies that exist and resist with, through and in spite of colonial extraction, appropriation, and erasure.

The structural continuities between the present, the imperial and colonial past, and the seemingly inescapable future of 'globalization' make it difficult to distinguish the figure of our present task of decoloniality from the historical ground of the colonial-modern's emergence. How can we distinguish the figures of resistance and transformation from the ground of coloniality and complicity, when body /body and body / thought divides insist on being continuously reproduced? We turn to the axiomatic inclusion of what lies in-the-middle.

Writing about the work of the artist, Kara Walker, who resolutely and exhilaratingly examines the lines of racial capitalism and the legacy of black slavery in the American South, Zadie Smith dwells on the title of one of Walker's early works - a pen and ink drawing of two women, one white and one black, bound to each other at the waist by a set of corset-strings: *What I Want History To Do to Me.* 'I might want history to reduce my historical antagonist – and increase

me. I might ask it to urgently remind me of why I'm moving forward, away from history. Or speak to me always of our intimate relation, of the ties that bind – and indelibly link – my history and me. I could want history to tell me that my future is tied to my past, whether I want it to be or not. Or ask it to promise me that my future will be revenge upon my past. Or that the past is not erased by this revenge,' (Smith 2020, 10).

Karen Barad explains that 'entanglements are not a name for the interconnectedness of all being as one, but rather specific material relations of the ongoing differentiating of the world. Entanglements are relations of obligation–being bound to the other–enfolded traces of othering,' (2006, 265). To be in the middle of decoloniality, *in medias res*, as this journal special issue invites us to be, is to be entangled with past histories, complex presents and transformational potentials, or, differently put, 'haunted'. To be haunted is to acknowledge the invisible historical and social ambiguities, differences, possibilities and impossibilities that our history lands us with. Haunting does something with time – the spectre is revenant, it begins by coming back. The logic of haunting, *hauntology*, involves mourning - making what remains present; naming – the use of language and voice to mark the name of that which is mourned; and the power of transformation or 'spirit work,' (Derrida 1994, 9; 11).

'De'-coloniality is haunted by the remains of coloniality, and the marks of languaging and voicing on the imagination of liberations past. It is also haunted by the future possibilities of being-otherwise, as in being different with difference. Salem observes that Derrida coins the concept of hauntology to ask us to listen and speak with the spectre, despite our academic training to ignore it, so that we can be *open to secrets and other forms of knowledge*. Listening to the spectre involves enmeshing past and future, listening to the past and the future at the same time (Salem 2019, 262). When we speak of the 'invisible middle' we gesture towards an always-already-absent-present affective solidarity. When we step into the invisible middle, the hierarchy of historical moments is suspended, if we begin, 'starting with but one moment, any moment, all moments made equal ... All time in no time at all,' (Barad 2010, 249).

Logic and signification set limits - including the very English language which we write with here. More broadly, colonial epistemologies and biopolitical frameworks cannot surface all the possibilities that might occupy the invisible middle. As Stella Rosa McDonald writes on the work of Australian Aboriginal artist of the Kudjlat and Gangalu peoples with Vanuatuan heritage, Daniel Boyd:

> At the heart of Boyd's paintings are two conflicting experiences of time; one, the Western linearity of past, present and future and, the other, the Aboriginal concept of the self as being enmeshed with the land, best expressed as Dreaming. Importantly, Boyd's work positions this chronological opposition as being at the heart of Aboriginal and white relations in post-colonial Australia. Boyd's paintings articulate the impossibility of representation, interpreting painting and history as similar approximations of the real. (McDonald 2016)

Despite giving rise to a certain historical and affective enmeshment, approaches to the invisible middle cannot fully represent the hauntology of decoloniality. What the 'included middle' can do is to harbour 'motley' conditions that afford the visibility and emergence of new, less hierarchical and more pluralistic capacities for affiliation. 'Decolonial interventions' including those in the invisible middle might be most hospitably treated as 'events in the making'. An event in the making is a thought on the cusp of articulation – 'a pre-articulated thought in motion,' (Manning

2009). In this circling around, including the invisible middle of decoloniality, we muddle, and try to discern blurred figures of resistance and transformation from the ground of continuing coloniality and complicity.

The invisible middle and the included middle

~ There is an always-already bare life.
A collectivity emerges
beyond the bounds, blurring the borders. ~

Our conversations have surfaced an animated resonance between two ideas that we have been exploring in separate and different spheres. Vered has explored the idea of the 'invisible middle' in embodied practices of solidarity (Vered and Mason 2015, Moten and Harney 2013), while Khoo and others have been exploring the potential of the 'included middle' that characterise transdisciplinary and transformative thought and practice (Khoo et al 2019; Nicolescu 2010; Nowotny and Gibbons 2001). Tracing back over our exchanges, which took place around several online meetings of the European Association of Development Institutes' (EADI) 'Convivial Thinking' decolonial collaborative, our conversations became animated by Bhambra's definition of decolonial thinking as being oriented toward transformation: 'an engagement with difference that makes a difference to what was originally thought' (Bhambra 2007, 880).

The concept of the invisible middle speaks to the tonalities, orientations and postures of shifting between individual and collective relationality, exposing what it means to be staked collectively … through the wager on collective life, (Campbell and Sitze 2013, 17). That of the included middle promises inclusiveness with transformative potential; by including that which lies between spirituality and science, between the arts and sciences, between material bodies and theory, between the coloniser and the colonised, and between history and the future.

Including the invisible middle raises the question of problem-framing and points to a fuller range of positions, strategies and possibilities. As we have noted, it is not easy to distinguish the figurations of resistance and/or transformation from the spectral ground of coloniality and complicity. This ground continuously demands the reprise of dualisms – of colonized and colonizer, thought and body, past and future. We look to the problem of decoloniality as a problem of 'undone science' (Richardson 2017), including the invisible middle as a way of undoing and unthinking the taken-for-granted assumptions about subjects, objects, logic, method and consciousness, and as a space for relationality that affords thinking-with and becoming collective in not fully foreclosed ways.

The invisible middle
The 'invisible middle' surfaces hidden-in-plain-sight politically engaged affective orientations most often undertaken by feminists, queer theorists, disability activists, and subaltern peoples, (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 7). It hosts but never directly names the affective entanglements emerging from an encounter that would otherwise be seen as political. The invisible middle first made itself present to the author at *Dance Politics* in 2014, an event produced by the Design Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI) and SenseLab. DS4SI is an American artistic research and development outfit situated at the intersections of social justice and activism, public art and social practice, design thinking and practice, and civic / popular engagement, that designs

and tests social interventions with and on behalf of marginalised populations, controversies and ways of life. Based out of Concordia University Montreal, the SenseLab is an international network of artists and academics, writers and makers, from a wide diversity of fields, working together at the crossroads of philosophy, art, and activism.

Dance Politics emerged through conversations between the two labs following the success of DS4SI's Dance Court project, a series of festive interventions into public tennis courts that asked: 'what if Dance courts were a part of the ubiquitous landscape?'

> Dance Court courted the uncovering of what movement knows in the face of the political. Emerging out of a semi-enclosed public space, the tennis court, it beat the ball of belonging. (As in, the match around whose place is whose.) Gently, and within the given structures of the time, Dance Court spoke to the place of diversity without a binding to the blood that made each so. This binding that speaks loud in the experience of any person associated to a margin. This binding that reminds how our society confines...
> But on Dance Court, people danced beneath the lines. They danced to the beats that speak to each and all. And as they did, those that might normally marginalise, couldn't even find the lines to do so... And so emerged: Dance Politics. (Vered and Mason 2015, 295)

Designed as a three-day event bringing together academics, artists, movement practitioners, social justice practitioners and queer activists from DS4SI and Senselab's affinities, Dance Politics explored the relation between bodily movement and social movements, and the way in which 'power exacts itself upon our bodies.' Engaging experimental collaborative and affective techniques to think at the limit, it asked: 'How are we moved by the movements we mold, lead and work to sustain? How the body and its ability to express joy is tied up in the political unconsciousness of empire? ... How can we break loose of the paradigms of power that we interact with habitually?' Through 'reading dance', the event aimed to collectively 'question the ways we have moved, and allow ourselves to break loose of habituated movements, let go, and move grounded in liberation and freedom,' (Dance Politics team 2014, 6-7).

Yet despite techniques in movement of thought and body, the event's encounter between different minds ended up prompting discomfort, brought on by tensions of epistemic and racial justice, and identity politics. People couldn't understand one another through the complex logic sets and languages of the different epistemologies and biopolitics from which they were coming. While embodiment emerged as a collective language, the tools to make sense of and articulate the power dynamics between bodies weren't available, or at least got lost amidst the politics. So people fell back to them-Selves, avoiding the *coalition* haunting the event, a coalition that emerges 'out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us.' (Moten and Harney 2013, 140-141). Despite the movement, people held on too tight to their posture and position. Perhaps the pull of the colonial-modern ground was stronger than the force gathering against it?

Nevertheless, an 'invisible middle' seemed to emerge through and despite all this, as a kind of tonality underneath the misunderstandings and micro-violence, as some kind of *mutual affective investment in the coalition* of Dance Politics. Vered and Mason suggest that coalition in dance politics emerges from an '(un)choreography of gestures,' where 'to move into coalition, to move

in coalition, requires a shifting of posture. A mutual demand of oneself and of the other to move through the stance of resistance and with it, into a collective body of persistence,' (2015, 316). As member of SenseLab, Brian Massumi notes, displacement is not just shifting place, it traces qualitative changes and indexes becoming through one nature-changing entanglement to another. Displacement is in fact 'transformation in relation' (2017, 8). In other words, mutual affective investment in an invisible middle emerges out of being entangled in the question of, or even hope for, potential transformation.

The unresolved question amidst these performative power dynamics is the question of what it means to be staked collectively. In other words, what it means to survive as bodies, sustained through collective emergence. Campbell & Sitze speak of being staked collectively as desiring one's individual existence to be sustained by a wager on collective life. Yet this wager is currently entangled in neoliberal biopolitics that controls populations by implying that people must gamble between their individual existence and the collective. The outcome: 'We survive without existing—or, better, we survive individually having forgotten how to exist collectively (given that there is no longer any outside left to view, let alone to stand on),' (2013, 17). Yet the invisible middle holds knowledge about the enmeshment of collective survival. For it is *affect*, which traces the mattering of intensities as they come together, transform and translate under and beyond meaning, semantics and fixed systems (Bertelsen & Murphie 2010). This affective force field creates a suspension from biopolitical capture. But in order to bare and bear with such capture, we must first understand that politics exists because humans have learned to separate and oppose themselves to their own bare life, while simultaneously maintaining themselves in relation to their bareness through an 'inclusive exclusion' (Agamben 1995, 11).

The paradox of this 'inclusive exclusion' leads us to what Claire Hemmings refers to as 'affective dissonance' – "the judgment arising from the distinction between experience and the world," and what she sees as the starting point for feminist politics, producing an embodied struggle that gives rise to an alternative standpoint for knowledge and politics. This standpoint is dynamic, emerging through the prioritization of embodiment and by focusing on knowing differently, knowing difference – ultimately knowing *how* rather than *what.* Hemmings suggests that this centrality of process is key to feminist epistemology, acting as both a political and methodological concern, one that 'seeks to enhance knowledge and create the conditions for transformation through an engagement with others across difference' (Hemmings 2012, 151).

The invisible middle does not neutralize tension, struggle and difference. Rather it hosts processes for (anti)productive weavings of difference, whether political, social or cultural. For instance, Silvia Riviera Cusicanqui's notion of *ch'ixi* speaks to a 'parallel coexistence of multiple cultural differences that do not extinguish but instead antagonize and complement each other. Each one reproduces itself from the depths of the past and relates to others in a contentious way' (2012). Massumi expresses this in terms of 'contrast' being *active differentiation in mutual determination* (2016, in conversation).

The motif of haunting allows us to think of 'empty' spaces, and the invisible middle, as anything but empty; just as the unceded Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands claimed as 'terra nullius' by European colonizers were anything but empty (Pateman 2007), and in fact cared for by the longest living cultures on earth for over 60,000 years. Australian Aboriginal curator of the Wiradjuri peoples, Emily McDaniel speaks of the 'void' as a politicized space that implicates our ways of seeing, understanding and knowing. 'As a spatial notion, the void holds misconceptions of vacuity and emptiness; a mark of the unseen, the unknown or the undefined… this notion stands in opposition to the reality of each artist's understanding; that the void is always

occupied by meaning and contains personal, historical and ancestral significance,' (McDaniel 2019, 2). In this way, a decolonial haunting of the invisible middle entangles a historical past dispossession with present and future traces of decolonial resistance.

And yet, the invisible middle is also concrete in the sense of being embodied. A hauntological re-membering and speaking of what remains makes it impossible to fully invisibilize and forget the bodies that are involved. As Gregg and Seigworth make clear, politically engaged affect must tend to the materialities of experience, where everyday practices of power can provide individual and collective bodies with potentials for survival beyond the hierarchies that are the norm (2010, 7). This moving beyond an accounting for bodies as they exist in the world towards a different sense of accountability, is a necessary part of becoming collectively staked. Judith Butler notes: 'For bodies to take place, the body must appear ... No one body establishes the space of appearance, but this action, this performative exercise happens only "between" bodies, in a space that constitutes the gap between my own body and another's. In this way, my body does not act alone, when it acts politically. Indeed, the action emerges from the "between"' (2011). It is this *between* of the invisible middle that can give the conditions for affective solidarity to emerge. Affective solidarity can be defined as a mode of engagement emerging from a political reflexivity that is not situated in identity, or even a shared identity, but from a shared drive for transformation against the odds (Hemmings 2012, 158).

In this vein, the invisible middle gives rise to a *collectivity of an otherwise*, embodied yet outside the bounds of biopolitics, reaching towards transformation. In order to so, it could be said that Bracha Ettinger's 'metramorphosis,' surfaces the psychoanalytic conditions for the invisible middle's affective solidarity. The 'metramorphosis' being a 'dynamic borderspace of active/passive co-emergence with-in and with-out the uncognized other… The metramorphosis opens a with-in/with-out space. It induces instances of co-emergence of meaning' (2006, 218). In the invisible middle, meaning does not conform to existing ontological and epistemological systems, but rather is immanent to, and emerging from, the middle's affective entanglements. Similarly, perhaps Karen Barad's 'intra-action' gives rise to the agential conditions for the 'invisible middle'; 'In contrast to the usual "interaction", the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct entities, agencies, events do not precede, but rather emerge from/through their intra-action. "Distinct" agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute sense, that is, agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements' (2010 267). In this way, the invisible middle begins to reveal possibilities for transformational decolonial interventions that can be different with difference, and move beyond limitations in epistemological, biopolitical and anti-racist/ identity political bounds.

Ultimately, these different lines of theorizing: from Agamben's bare inclusion, to Butler's performative body, to Campbell and Sitze's collective staking, to Barad's intra-action and Ettinger's metramorphosis - all converge on the invisible middle as a site for *embodying* and *being-with* 'decolonial love,' through and in spite of the lines that divide. In the work *Islands of Decolonial Love* Canadian artist of the Nishnaabeg First Nations, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson explores, among other things, the shift from individual to collective subjectivity through songs and stories, and perhaps most noticeably in her use of *'i'*. We see i as the always-already entangled one mattering in the middle of decoloniality.

> they wove themselves in the crowd. they stood there. i saw them with my own eyes. just standing there. just still. just present. they lined that whole street, those ones. aahh. they felt good those ones. no one forgot them that day. they looked us in the

eye that day. you know when that one, maybe a special one, looks you in the eye, and maybe for just a second you don't look away. maybe for a second you just let yourself look back. and then maybe you feel something. something good. something that maybe you think you aren't supposed to feel, maybe something you didn't feel for a long time. and for that second you get all filled up with that special one. that one that makes you stay when you should go. full of potential. full of hope. full of love. and you fill yourself up with as much of that special as you can. and then you just keep walking. you just hold your head up high and you keep walking. (Simpson 2013)

The included middle

The 'Included Middle' is an axiomatic concept in transdisciplinary thinking. Transdisciplinarity is an epistemological orientation that challenges established Newtonian (mechanical) and Cartesian (dualistic) approaches to knowledge and reality which privilege predictability, linearity, dualism, reductionism, exclusive logic and control (MacGregor 2015a). In contrast, transdisciplinarity is predicated upon complexity and inclusive logic. Transdisciplinary thinking draws widely from metaphysics, quantum physics, and complexity science to develop a new approach to understanding problems, overcoming obstacles in thinking and knowledge creation.

Transdisciplinarity involves three axioms: at the level of ontology, it accepts that there are multiple levels of reality. Transdisciplinarity aspires to unify disparate strands of knowledge and ways of knowing the world, being convinced that a move in this direction is necessary in order for people to understand the world and address its messy problems more adequately (MacGregor 2015a; 2015b; Nicolescu 2014). On the first, ontological level, transdisciplinarity proposes that three levels of reality coexist, with movement among the subjective and objective levels mediated by something called the 'Hidden Third'. Secondly, at the pragmatic level, the logic of the included middle enables the problems of dualism and conflict to be overcome in an epistemically non-violent manner. Thirdly at the epistemological level, transdisciplinarity views knowledge not as clear, simple or 'finished', but as complex and emergent.

In the 'Nicolescuian' view of transdisciplinarity (MacGregor 2015b), the three levels of reality include i) the internal Subject world of humans' consciousness and political, social, historical, and individual perspectives, and ii) the external Object world of environmental, economic, and cosmic/planetary realities. Interaction between the Subject and Object worlds are mediated by the hidden third level of experiences, intuitions, interpretations, descriptions, representations, images, and formulas. Nicolescu posits the hidden third as an intuitive zone of non-resistance to others' ideas, mediated by interfaces of culture, art, religions, and spiritualities which 'lubricate' the interactions and flows between consciousness and information (MacGregor 2015b). Nicolescu drew on the analogy of the quantum vacuum from his field of scientific expertise to come up with a concept that could allow for the integration of differing world views to create new knowledge, despite potential resistance coming from said differing worldviews. The quantum vacuum is not empty, but a state of lowest energy, and it is at this point that there is the greatest readiness for emergence and potential. Thus, the Hidden Third is an invisible zone of mediation where incommensurability of views can be temporarily overcome, allowing learning, transformation and solutions to wicked problems to emerge.

The logic of the included middle strives to overcome the 'Cartesian' separation of Subject and Object particular to Eurocentric Western thought. The 'middle' is the potential of knowledge

creation in the middle ground, where the apparently divided can be unified, and the apparently contradictory is allowed to be perceived as noncontradictory. Opposing aspects of a phenomenon that are assumed to be independent and antagonistic can be understood as being in dynamic relationship, and possibly in a temporary state of agreement that reflects a higher level of complexity (MacGregor 2015b).

The transdisciplinary concepts of included middle and hidden third offer ways out of the 'double bind' thinking that may arise in the context of decoloniality. The demand to become 'authentically' decolonized presents potential double-binds and forms of schizophrenic thinking associated with the double-bind. In his *'Steps to an Ecology of Mind'*, Gregory Bateson (1972) offers the concept of the double-bind as a condition where a subject faces two conflicting demands, but it is not a simple 'no-win' scenario, as the contradiction may be unexpressed or invisible, unless past context is also understood. The double-bind arises when a respected authority imposes a demand that is inherently impossible to fulfil because the broader context confounds it (Bateson 1956). The double-bind tends to recur, yet the subject cannot escape but continues to be torn in different directions, while remaining unable to confront or resolve the conflict between one demand and the other.

Within the EADI Convivial Thinking reading circles that we participated in, we engaged in reading and discussion that critiqued myths of monocultural origins and epistemic divides, for example even in mathematics, and their implicit hierarchies of superiority and inferiority, assumptions about who is an expert and who can be recognized (Raju 2004). We talked about the in/visibility of different types of knowledges in academia and contrasted that with embodied performativities (dance politics and artistic practices) of knowing. While we remain strongly enthused by the open and flexible affordances of the hidden third and included middle, we also remain (hopefully) suspicious of possible scientism, reductionism and blind spots.

Clare Land (2015) reminds well-meaning 'allies' who place themselves into the space of solidarity and 'coalition' with Indigenous struggles for decoloniality that 'solidarity' can be a microcosm of colonial relationships that reflect and reproduce colonial hierarchies of power and control. Spaces of decoloniality can be sites of pain and of hurtful and difficult processes and thus sites of (un)learning and transformation are never easy or unproblematic. This is not to say that the latter cannot happen, but that the problematic and painful processes cannot simply be glossed over or allowed to remain as blind spots (15).

The question of blind spots reminds us that there are secret as well as revealed knowledges. Including sacred knowledges means honoring certain forms of occlusion, the putting-on of blinds. In writing this article, we have found ourselves considering examples from Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. Since the 1970s, Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art has risen to great prominence in the contemporary global art world as one of the most exciting genres of contemporary art. However, Aboriginal artists can only access the stories that they have inherited rights to through their kinship moieties. Much within these knowledges remains sacred, to be passed down through kinship lines and initiation rites and is not meant to be widely intelligible. Some accounts suggest for example, that the characteristic dots and other marks in Australian Aboriginal 'dot paintings' have an intentionally occluding purpose, to hide important knowledge from the colonizing settler society and to keep sacred and kin-related knowledge and iconography private, secret and undecipherable (Tan 2015). Discussing the work of the renowned Kuninjku artist John Mawurndjul AM's 'Mardayin Design at Milmilngkan', McDaniel (2019) explains that this work depicts an abstracted and geometric representation of a ceremonial site. The deeper ceremonial information contained within the work is purposefully withheld. In the

broader context of the exhibition, it emphasizes that the void often contains 'knowledge that is intentionally placed beyond the limits of an individual's knowing.'

Entangled study: being-with the motley in the colonial aftermath

Barad points out that the promise of a complete repair is always-already an empty promise, but many traces of possible reconfigurings suggest themselves. How should we address the past and future, and the calls to respond to or take responsibility for the entangled inheritances that haunt us, and yet move towards a sense of justice that is yet to come (2010)? Here, we want to address two main concerns about decolonial interventions *in medias res* – what kind of beings or subjectivities should we think with, and how to think being-with?

The Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui draws upon indigenous Aymara and Qhichwa ideas to advance a concept of the 'motley', *ch'ixi* to describe a societal vision that allows the baring and bearing-with different forms of visibility and collective emergence, refuses dualisms and hierarchies, and keeps non-hierarchical capacities for affiliation open. This distinctive way of thinking has arisen out of her refusal to reformulate colonial hierarchical binaries (2015). Instead, she situates herself in the middle of several different strands of emancipatory thinking that exist in Bolivia, offering pointed critiques of each of 'the traps inherent in the logic of representation' (Freeland 2019). 'The term "original people" arms and recognizes but at the same time obscures and excludes the large majority of the Aymara - and Qhichwa - speaking population of the sub-tropics, the mining centers, the cities, and the indigenous commercial networks of the internal and black markets. It is therefore a suitable term for the strategy of depriving indigenous peoples of their potentially hegemonic status and their capacity to affect the state.' (Rivera Cusicanqui 2012). Rivera Cusicanqui is the best-known interpreter of Zavaleta's theory of the 'motley society' as the aftermath of colonialism. Rather than being dualistically racialized (white/non-white) or separable into indigenous versus 'colonialist,' Bolivia's post-colonial condition is 'motley' (*abigarrado)* as the result of the imperial-colonial superimposition of different kinds of society upon each other. The result is that these coexist in a disjointed way and establish relations of domination and distortion of some in relation to others. Rivera Cusicanqui offers us a different term, *ch'ixi,* to denote 'a parallel coexistence of difference' (2012). The motley condition, resulting from colonial domination, should not be seen as entirely and inherently 'good', or 'bad', but is ambiguous, having simultaneously politically advantageous and obstructive effects. The motley condition is a persistent one, indicating that coloniality has not and possibly can never be eradicated from political and social relations.

In other words, the motley is a colonial present that does not rule out 'the multisocietal' or 'pluriversal' (Escobar 2018). When it is used to think forwards, it signifies a collective political subjectivity that neither seeks to homogenize, nor to divide, and therefore does not cancel out multiple possibilities for historical-political reconstruction. The motley idea allows a certain coexistence and superimposition of different 'societies' as matrixes of social relations with different qualities and historical temporalities, without necessitating the disjointed quality required by the colonial form of domination or some reformulation of it.

Approaching the social in a more intimate way, a different tactic for navigating the colonial aftermath is suggested by Moten and Harney's concept of 'the social world of study'*,* in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study.* Moten and Harney deploy the term 'study' to point to a radical, complex and poetic social sphere, 'the undercommons,' as a space that enables both thinking-through and becoming a collective where one can give up 'possession', thereby becoming free to contribute by 'being in a space'.

> So, we enter into the social world of study, which is one in which you start to lose
> track of your debts and begin to see that the whole point is to lose track of them and

just build them in a way that allows for everyone to feel that she or he can contribute or not contribute to being in a space... I've been thinking more and more of study as something not where everybody dissolves into the student, but where people sort of take turns doing things for each other or for the others, and where you allow yourself to be possessed by others as they do something. That also is a kind of dispossession of what you might otherwise have been holding onto, and that possession is released in a certain way voluntarily, and then some other possession occurs by others. (2015, 109)

Moten and Harney suggest study as *poiesis*, the 'fugitive art of social life' as a way of being 'in the break, as if entering again and again the broken world, to trace the visionary company and join it' (12). The term 'study' as a way of life points to a certain intellectuality of the everyday social (110). Whether it be their examples of two men sitting on the porch just being and talking, at a jam session or in a factory, it starts with an everyday being with the brokenness, to touch one (an)other, and ends with the 'abolition of credit' - the dissolution of biopolitical capture and any hold over our capacity to live, to bare, to bear.

A broadening the joining - baring, bearing and being in the middle

~ "When we define ourselves, when I define myself,
the place in which I am like you and the place in which I am not like you,
I'm not excluding you from the joining,
I'm broadening the joining.[3]"
Audre Lorde ~

Haunting is not exactly welcome – nobody asks to be haunted. Historical haunting is the baring of violent and destructive legacies from the colonial past in the present, yet Salem (2019) also argues that some forms of haunting could be read as being productive as well as destructive. In our explorations that have tried to resist the body-body / body-thought divides, a decolonial hauntology brings to bear entanglements and opens up a middle, which is 'not the intertwining of two (or more) states/entities/events, but a calling into question of the very nature of two-ness, and ultimately of one-ness as well. Duality, unity, multiplicity, being are, in this way, undone and "between" will never be the same as one or its other subjectivity. One is too few, two is too many …Quantum entanglement theory require/inspire a new sense of a-count-ability, a new arithmetic, a new calculus of response-ability,' (Barad 2010, 251). Barad's conclusion is one we would like to think towards - what if differentiating is a material act of connection and commitment, and not separation at all? Her theorizing of entanglement allows a sense of optimism, connection and purpose to accompany uncertainty.

We conclude our tracing of our conversation and 'study', our being-with each other, by returning to Ettinger's theory of matrixial trans-subjectivity, which is centred on poiesis, co-

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[3] While Lorde is asking to be included via a kind of identity politics, and this conversation veers beyond the border thinking that identity politics tends to promote, we still see power within a 'broadening of the joining' – from the binding of what Walker's figures wants history to do to them, to the middle of dance politics. 'Within a broadening of the joining' is the space of metramorphosis – where the invisible and included middle, and transformation, are possible.

creative production, and the activity of bringing into being something that did not exist before. It is an approach that accommodates plurality rather than seeking to straightforwardly negate domination. The matrixial borderspace connects a conceptual, ethical working-through with artistic practice as aesthetical working-through, and it is more commonly read in the contexts of contemporary art, psychoanalysis, women's studies and cultural studies, as compared to Grosfuguel's or Mignolo's reading of matrix as dominant global political economy.

Therefore, we come full circle back to Grosfuguel's question about the possibility of transcending the economy-culture divide. Yet including the invisible middle now reminds us that it is possible to bare and bear with the bounds of the colonial modern through (un)choreographic gestures, metramorphoses that displace our bodies into affective solidarity and a co-emergence of meaning, entangled in our desires to move towards transformation.

Ettinger's metaphor of the womb/matrix refuses to identify it 'as an organ of receptivity or origin' or 'container,' but instead sees it as a means to signify the potentiality for human differentiation-in-co-emergence. She does not associate the womb with the chronological past, where individuals emerged from, but as a common space and time of co-emergence in a present that stretches into the future (2006, 220-221). Ettinger's matrixial borderspace locates 'woman' and embodiment not as the Other but as 'a co-emerging self with m/Other'. The term 'M/Other' signifies a connected, borderlinking figure that allows differentiation, emergence and solidarity embodied in processes that continuously form, inform, exform and transform lives in space and time (2006, 2018; 220). The womb and M/Other metaphors convey an inter-subjectivity and relationality that are different and alternative to the phallocentric. The idea of a relational matrix offers us something quite different from the notion of the discrete, bounded and singular subject, compelled by anxieties about separations, splits, cuts, and cleavages. The latter, Ettinger points out, are forms of castration anxiety that we need not keep putting foremost.

Our chosen starting point has been the 'middle' - of bodies, of epistemic decoloniality, of an epistemic crisis, of a crisis of knowledge institutions and of ideologies. Decolonial visions and cosmovisions of epistemic liberation, epistemic freedom, diversity of struggles and plurality of realities have been offered, in hope, to the world. A motley, multisocietal or pluriversal view from the invisible middle, included middle and hidden third implies that decoloniality need not require a linear teleology: '[t]here is no *post* or *pre* in this vision of history that is not linear or teleological but rather moves in cycles and spirals and sets out on a course without neglecting to return to the same point… The regression or progression, the repetition or overcoming of the past is at play in each conjuncture and is dependent more on our acts than on our words… "anticipatory consciousness"—that both discerns and realizes decolonization at the same time.' (Rivera Cusicanqui 2012)

Can we, as Bhambra invites, engage with difference in a way that makes a difference to what was originally thought? We repair, in the sense of 'a journey back' from decolonization, via its hauntology to decoloniality, to baring and bearing-with the 'invisible middle', studying, being-with the transdisciplinary affordances of the hidden third and included middle. This repair, this journey back brings accountability towards responsibility in an entangled world where is it unclear what we, in Kara Walker's words, want our history to do to us. 'Responsibility is not an obligation that the subject chooses but rather an incarnate relation that precedes the intentionality of consciousness. Responsibility is not a calculation to be performed. It is a relation always already integral to the world's ongoing intra-active becoming and not-becoming. It is an iterative (re)opening up to, an enabling of responsiveness. Not through the realisation of some existing possibility, but through the iterative reworking of im/possibility, an ongoing rupturing, a cross-

cutting of topological reconfiguring of the space of responsibility … Only in this ongoing responsibility to the entangled other, without dismissal (without "enough already!"), is there the possibility of justice-to-come,' (Barad 2010, 264-5).

~ And it's here.
You've stepped in.
Into these questions, into these actions,
into these bodies and spaces and the void that is our (anti)productive resistance.
By being here, you're letting yourself be held by the force that is our crossing ourselves
[out] to become collective.
So take care of your bodies and take care of the gaps, and be ready to
become with the difference you're amidst. ~

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